

# How to Write Great Headlines

by Carol Dunitz, Ph.D.

The fisherman uses bait to catch a fish. Without bait, there is no chance a fish will bite on his hook. Your headline is like bait. If it does not attract readers, there is no chance they will read your copy.

A great headline leaves no room for misinterpretation. It is prominent, forceful, and specific. A great headline speaks to readers and makes them want to read more. A great sub-headline is simply an extension of the headline. The two work in tandem.

**Promise a Benefit.** The best headlines offer readers something they want or need. They can be presented as a statement, a question, a command, a fragment sentence -- even a single word. But what they all have in common is that they pique interest and get readers to move on to the copy. Try leafing through your favorite magazine or newspaper. Make a note of the headlines that grab you. Look at what is working for others and figure out how you can apply the same principles to what you have to advertise.

**Use Easy-to-Read Typefaces.** Forget about fancy typefaces that try to make a statement. Your statement is your headline. Be sure to use typefaces that readers don't have to figure out. You want clean, clear, easily discerned letters that form words that pop because of your great headline.

**Don't be too Clever.** Make it easy for your prospects to understand what you're offering. There are too many ads to compete with to use a headline that makes the reader figure out what you are trying to say.

Your headline is the single most important part of your ad. While sharp graphics and well-written copy enhance the effectiveness of your ad, you will get nowhere fast without a headline that draws. Practice writing headlines and try them out with friends and associates to discover what resonates with them. After a while you'll know what not only sounds good but is good.

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